

aroused from bed, her sparse hair tight-clumped in a semi-circle of kid-curlers, Mrs. Conover crouched in a moaning, rocking heap. Scared, whispering groups of servants blocked the doorways or peered curiously in from behind curtains. The air was thick with the pungent smell of antiseptics. The Railroader, lying motionless beneath the unshaded glare of a half-dozen gas jets, was swathed of head and bandaged of arm. He was coatless, and his shirt and waistcoat were thrown open, disclosing his mighty chest. Across the couch-end his feet, still booted and spurred, protruded stiffly as a manikin's.

It was upon this scene that Anice and Clive entered. At sight of the girl, Mrs. Conover scrambled to her feet, and with a wild outburst of scared sobs, scuttled forward to meet her, the bedside slippers shuffling and sliding grotesquely along the polished floor. Anice took the panic-stricken weeping creature into her arms and whispered what words of comfort and encouragement she could.

Meanwhile Clive, not desiring to break in on the doctors' conference, turned to the doorway again and asked a question of one of the servants. For reply, the groom, Giles, was thrust forward and obliged to repeat, with dolorous unctious, for the tenth time within an hour, the story of the accident.

"You see, sir," he said, lowering his voice as though in the room with a corpse, "Mr. Conover sent word for me to ride with him. We started off at a dead run, and my horse couldn't no ways keep up with Dunderberg, so I follows along behind as fast as I could, but I couldn't keep up to the right distance between us, to save me. Mr. Conover turns out of the drive, up Pompton Avenue, sir, and on past the Humason place, me a-followin' as fast as I could. All of a sudden I catches up. It's in that dark, woody patch of road just this side the quarries. The way I happens to catch up is because Dunderberg was havin' one of them tantrums of his an' Mr. Conover was givin' it to him for all he was worth, crop an' spur, an' Dunderberg a-whirlin' around and passagin' an' tryin' his best to rear. An' every time that horse's forelegs goes up in the air Mr. Conover'd bring his fist down between his ears an' down'd come Dunderberg on all-fours again. They was takin' up all the road, wide as it is, an' Dunderberg was lashin' an' plugin' like he was crazy, an' Mr. Conover stickin' on like he was glued there an' sendin' in the spurs and the whacks of the crop till you'd 'a'

thought he'd kill the brute. Then, Dunderberg makes a dive ahead an' gets out alongside the quarry-pit an' tries to rear again. Right on the edge of the pit."

"Yes," said Clive excitedly, as the groom paused, "and then?"

"Why, sir, I can't rightly tell, the light was so bad. If it'd been any one else but Mr. Conover, I'd say he lost his nerve, an' when Dunderberg reared up he forget to bring him down like he'd done those other times, or maybe he did hit the horse between the ears again an' didn't hit hard enough. Anyhow, over goes Dunderberg—backward—clean fifteen feet drop—into the quarry. An' Mr. Conover under him. An' then—"

But Clive had moved away. The doctors had finished their consultation, and one of them—Dr. Hawes, the Conover family physician—had again approached that silent figure on the couch.

At sight of Standish the second doctor came forward to meet the young man.

"No," he whispered, reading the unspoken question in Clive's face, "no possible hope. He can't last over an hour longer at most. Another man, crushed as he was, would have been killed at once. As it is, he probably

won't recover consciousness. Nothing but his tremendous vitality holds the shreds of life in him so long as this."

"Does his wife know—?"

"She is not in a state to be told. I wish we could persuade her to leave the room. Perhaps Miss Lanier—"

A gesture from Dr. Hawes drew them toward the couch.

"He is coming to his senses," said the family physician, adding under his breath, so that only his colleague and Clive could hear, "it is the final rally. Not one man in a thousand—"

But Clive had caught Anice's eye and beckoned her to lead Mrs. Conover to the side of the couch.

The Railroader's face, set like carved granite, began to twitch. The rigid mouth relaxed its set whiteness and the eyelids flickered. Mrs. Conover, at these signs of life, prepared for a fresh attack of hysteria, but a gentle, firm pressure of Anice's hand in hers forestalled the outburst. With an aggrieved look at the girl, Letty again turned her scared attention to her husband.

Dr. Hawes was bending once more over the prostrate man, seeking to employ a restorative. Now he rose, and as he did so, Caleb's eyes opened.

There was no bewilderment, no surprise nor pain in the calm glance that swept his garish surroundings.

"To the Next Governor of the Mountain State," solemnly proclaimed Anice.



"Is he suffering?" whispered Anice.

"Or—"

"Horribly," returned Dr. Hawes in the same tone. "He—"

The shrewd, pale eyes that scorned to show trace of physical or mental anguish, slowly took in the group beside the couch, resting first on the two physicians, then on Anice Lanier.

As he saw and recognized Anice the first change came over the dying man's hard-set features. A look of perplexity that merged into glad surprise lighted his whole face, smoothing from it with magic touch every line of care, thought or time; transfiguring it into the countenance of a happy boy. Long he gazed and held her sympathetic glance, that look of youth and gladness growing and deepening on his face, while all around stood silent and marveling.

It was Mrs. Conover who broke the spell.

"Oh, Caleb!" she wailed querulously, "you said no horse could get the better of you. And now—"

At her words the beadle light was gone from Conover's eyes. In its stead came a gleam of grim, cynical amusement. Then, his gaze traveling past Anice to Clive Standish, his brows contracted in a frown of displeasure. But this, too, faded. The washed head settled lower among the cushions, the powerful body seemed to shrink and flatten. The eyes closed, and Conover lay very still.

His wife, divining for the first time the actual state of affairs, flung herself forward on her knees beside the silent figure, her sobs falling to a crescendo cry of terror.

Slowly Caleb Conover opened his eyes. Reluctantly, as though drawn back by sheer force from the very threshold of the wide portals of Rest, his spirit paused for an instant longer in its earthly abode—paused and stared up, as a dying hawk, in the Railroader's stiffening face.

For a moment his eyes—already wide with the awful mystery of the Beyond—strayed over his kneeling wife; over the sparse locks bunched up in that halo of kidcurlers; over the pudgy shape so mellancholly outlined by the sheer nig-gown; over the tear-swollen red eyes, the blotched cheeks, the quivering pursed-up mouth.

"Letty," he panted, inired disgust, "you look—more like a mussy rabbit—every day!"

THE END

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